

FLY LINES



JUNE 2024

June Meeting with Sam Fawke (Senior Technical Officer – Conservation Hatchery)

Hailing from a background in Aquaculture and Environmental Management, Sam has over 16 years of experience in the aquaculture industry. He has spent the last nine years at Sealife Melbourne aquarium overseeing the operations of a range of species and programs, including sharks, crocs, frogs and fish. Water and animals are his passion.

Thursday, June 20,
7:30pm, at the
Kelvin Club

He has recently stepped up to a new role at the Victorian Fisheries Authority, where he is now focusing on the conservation of some of Victoria's most threatened and endangered freshwater species. So come along and hear more about his journey and the role Snobs Creek plays in both conservation and salmonid fish production and stocking.

We would encourage all members to attend what will be a great evening, and for those who would like to join us for a meal beforehand PLEASE make a booking for dinner by emailing Terry Rogers at terryrogers@bigpond.com before Tuesday, June 18.



Sam in action

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Annual Dinner & Auction in August

You are Invited to the VFFA Annual Dinner and Auction

on Wednesday August 28, 2024

at The Kelvin Club, 14 - 30 Melbourne Place, City

Our Special Guest Speaker is Cameron McGregor

Dinner and welcome drink for members and guests is \$85pp

Come along for a fun night with fellow members, and support your club, and be in the running to win some amazing equipment and prizes

*Advanced email bookings to Terry on
terryrogers@bigpond.com - why not BOOK A TABLE!*

In addition to being a superb guide Cameron is a fantastic fisherman, and an all-round-nice-guy, our guest speaker, Cameron MrGregor from Riverescapes, has many other professional achievements including the discovery of a remnant population of olive perchlets in the Lachlan River, and a new species of Coloburiscoides mayfly.

The presentation he has for us is sure to be informative and entertaining, just the right recipe for a good night at the Kelvin Club.



Lunch with Pilks in July

Members are reminded that our July meeting will be a lunchtime event.

Come along for an afternoon of friendship, good food and wit at the Kelvin Club, Melbourne Place CBD, at 12noon on Thursday July 18, with John Pilkington as he recounts the highlights of his life-long affair with The Big River.

Reserve your seat by contacting Terry on
terryrogers@bigpond.com – or call 0415 872372



President's Message

Dear fellow members, our new website is rapidly taking shape and should be operating in the near future. The new website will be an important source of information and will streamline event coordination and registration.

I was a guest of the Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club at their annual dinner. The dinner was held at the Warrnambool Horse Racing Club in a heritage listed building. About 70 members and guests were treated to a wonderful multi-course game menu especially prepared for the night. It was a great night and I was very happy, with our secretary Beth Hourigan, to be there and show the VFFA's support for the Warrnambool club.

Our VFFA membership remains a high priority for the committee. A membership sub-committee comprising past Presidents Mike Jarvis and Hamish Hughes, Vice Presidents John Spragg and Rod Hirst, and recent new member Bernard Chu and myself have been meeting to plan our drive for new members. Our survey of existing members has been completed, and I have been meeting with our new members. I have initiated a monthly President's Lunch at the Kelvin Club to meet and speak to new members. The first lunch was a great success, and Bernard Chu, our latest new member, has agreed to join the membership sub-committee.

Progress continues with the Australian Fly Fishing Museum (AFFM) in Tasmania. Mike Stevens, who is a VFFA member and past chairman of the museum management committee, continues to work toward the reopening of the museum in October. On a separate but related topic, progress continues to be made on a space at Snobbs Creek



Simon Joel

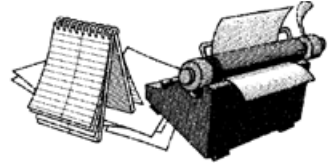
Hatchery for an exhibition of our memorabilia. Past president David Hooke and myself are involved in this exciting development, along with VFFA member Terry George from the Australian Trout Foundation.

The glass cabinet in the strategy room of the Kelvin Club now houses more of our memorabilia. The strategy room, now with our up-to-date honour boards, library, glass cabinet and memorabilia, has a real feeling of a home for the VFFA and has been a superb venue for my small format President's lunches.

Our long serving treasurer Tony Mitchem will be leaving the Council at the end of June. Tony has been the VFFA Treasure since 2007 and will be greatly missed. On behalf of the Council and members of the VFFA I would thank Tony for his long and distinguished service to the VFFA, and would wish Tony and Dawn well as they move to Phillip Island.

Simon Joel

From the EDITOR'S DESK



From the Assistant Editor Rod Hirst

"You can learn so much by being quiet and watching" - unknown businessman

"A fish with its mouth closed does not get hooked" - unknown businessman

"When I was a boy of fourteen my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand the old man being around. But when I got to twenty-one I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years"
- Mark Twain

It was with much trepidation I recently opened my mouth (unlike the fish mentioned above) and nominated myself to be the Assistant Editor of *Fly Lines*.

The quotes above will ring in my ears as I begin my first journey as an editor. English, writing essays, or spotting grammatical errors in prose were never mentioned as one of my strong suits during my schooling, university or working life. Some would say the opposite. Yet here we are and here we go.

It was obvious to me that my first editorial should talk about my first attempts at the art of fly fishing, and

it should include lots of pictures. This would mean less text and less chance of making a hash of the English language. It would also hopefully resonate with the readership, or least those who still remember that first year of giving it a flick.

In VFFA terms, and by almost any measure, I am a novice, having only started the wonderful art of fly fishing in March 2017 at fifty-five years of age. As a golfer who had his first lesson as a thirty-five year old (We did not count my dad's early coaching attempts), I was determined to start my fly fishing with lessons and guides. This was to alleviate to opportunity for bad habits to become ingrained in my new passion.

Werner Birkner of GVFFC fame at the time, was my first guide on a beautiful autumn day on the Goulburn. We fished, Willow Grubs, cast at 5lb browns and in the last hour we landed my first fish in the shallow edge. I say 'we' for a reason. Bringing a guide when you don't know much was such a good decision on my part.

As we saw the fish rise to take the perfectly presented fly it seemed that life could not get any better.



My First Fish - Goulburn Brown - March 2017

Dave Pickering, who some of you may know, and who is one of the best fishermen that I have fished with gave me some "casting lessons" in preparation for my trip in March 2017 to New Zealand.

Casting 40 feet under willows was going to be a learning curve. I was lucky to go with Hamish Hughes (VFFA Past President) and our latest new member Hugh Forbes. These venerable gents have become my fishing buddies ever since. A trip or two every year and life's balance is restored.

The trip was full of learning curves and so many highs it is hard to recount them all. I will never forget the day we caught the two rainbows on the Te Anua tailrace in the above photos. It was blowing a gale, it was very rocky, and we stayed dry and had a ball. The sound of the rainbow taking off and disappearing across the river was a sound that will live with me forever.

I must have lost 8 fish, but caught 3 all in an hour or so. It was so much fun.

The other thing that amazed me was how many great rivers we could fish and how few obstructions there were on the banks to catch a bad cast. I think that is one of the real reasons I loved this trip as a novice. I got to cast away without fear.

The trip ending up delivering a few personal bests: Biggest Fish, Biggest



My Personal Best - NZ Brown - March 2017



The best day of my life - Te Anua Tail Race

Brown, Biggest Rainbow and Most Fish caught in a day. Most off all this trip delivered memories that will last a life time

Needless to say I was hooked, and although I never seem to fish as much as I would like, I still love the process of getting ready to go. Cleaning the line, looking at the flies that should work, and bringing along a Royal Wulff which always seems to work!

As a highly competitive person I am always surprised that for some unknown reason I do not seek to catch lots of fish or bigger fish or more fish than my companions. Fly fishing transports me to my happy place - happy to walk up a river, happy to watch from the bank to see if we can spot a fish or even better a rising one.

Perhaps I will explore this quirk of nature in my next editorial if our editor gives me another shot.



Hugh Forbes - Same place same result



Aparima River - South Island

VFFA Annual General Meeting by ZOOM

You're invited to the 2024 AGM using the link below on your laptop, ipad or iphone. ZOOM was used successfully during the pandemic, so Council felt it could be easier for members to attend this year from the comfort of their own homes.

Either use this Link or copy the full [https// address](https://address) into your browser.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84181606297?pwd=LGoaZkIrL7b3mP1AFVb2grBI9o5Nds.1> (Meeting ID: 841 8160 6297
Passcode: 871458)

If you would like a nomination form sent to you directly - email

VFFA1932@gmail.com, or call Beth Hourigan on 0415 872 372.

Andrew Fuller – Thursday May 16 Meeting

As I stand here tonight and look around, I can see more than a hundred years of collective fly fishing experience - so I'm not here to tell you what to do. So tonight I want to talk about something that has influenced my fly fishing journey, and probably the journey of every fly fisher I know, and that is luck. Good luck and bad luck, and what you can do to make the most of it if good luck happens to strike.

Luck is a word often used by gamblers, and we use it in fly fishing the same way. For instance, when a mate heads upstream from you, you might say: "Good luck". And just like the chronic gambler, fly fishing has a tendency to consume one's life. It certainly has mine. She says she's come around, but deep down I know mum will never be at peace with my decision to give up on university and follow this path of madness in fly fishing retail. But here I am. Lucky to have found fly fishing. And I'm guessing most of you feel pretty lucky to have found fly fishing too!

Now, when good luck happens to others, sometimes it feels pretty unfair! I've done my fair share of exotic fly fishing holidays, and often in large groups with a diverse range of fly fishing abilities. One



Andrew Fuller from The Flyfisher

accurate observation is that the worst angler always seems to catch the biggest fish.

Some years ago I was in Venezuela hosting a group. Now real fly fishers stand out because they ask the right questions and are hyper aware of what they're trying to achieve. But in the group we had two blokes who were more bait fishermen than fly fishermen.

They were slow and overweight, and couldn't cast more than 30 feet. Anyway, one old mate was wading down a flat looking for bonefish when something

much larger showed up. It was quickly identified by his knowledgeable guide as a big permit. Now for those not familiar with permit, they're like the white whale of fly fishing. Hard to find. And when you do, and manage to make the perfect cast, they still don't eat. Anyway, thanks to our old mate's crappy casting he put the fly 20 feet short of the fish and the line landed with a crash. But this got the attention of the permit, which turned and engulfed his fly, and he'd soon landed the kind of permit one could only ever dream of catching. The fish was estimated at 30 lb and was, of course, the fish of the trip.

And then there's the downright hooligans who catch the big ones. People that turn up more for the beer than the fishing, then proceed to get the chocolates.

But am I missing something? Just because these overweight, lazy, beer swilling anglers can't cast, this doesn't necessarily mean they can't fish. Or does it? There has to be some luck in it.

I've been one of these lucky guys.

One day up in the Tiwi Islands a fish swam along, and without thinking

too much I put a fly in front of it and caught it. It was a thing called a Brown Morwong, or 'Brown Bastard' as they're more colloquially known. It was a big one, and my mate couldn't believe my luck. If it weren't for his excitement, I don't think I would have realised the gravity of my capture.

Right now this mate of mine is probably out at a pub or fly fishing dinner somewhere, telling his mates about this lazy character from Melbourne who caught the fish of his dreams without even trying. Of course, now that I know how good these Brown Morwong are I haven't had the chance to cast to one since.

So sometimes, good luck is just being in the right place at the right time.

One such time for me was at Erfalik in Greenland. We were there fishing for arctic char. It was the start of the season, and the fish were coming in fresh from the ocean. They are chrome in colour and very, very angry when hooked. In fact, they're the hardest fighting fish I've caught in freshwater.



The May meeting was a great opportunity to share a meal together



Enjoying a meal together at the May meeting



Our meetings are great social events and wonderful opportunities to catch up with other members'

On this particular day we'd decided to strap the boots on and go for a hike to an unfished blue line on the map that flowed into the main lake. That blue line turned out to be devoid of life, so feeling a tad beaten we began the mammoth return walk back to camp. To make matters worse, when we stopped for a bite on a marshy shore of the lake, my backpack rolled into the water and drowned an expensive camera.

While we were there wondering how the day could get any worse, I saw out the corner of my eye a fish rise. And then another. Now arctic char aren't a fish known for rising, and especially not to a rare caddis hatch at Erfalik. My mate and I scrambled through our fly boxes looking for a dry fly that might work. No prior research had intimated that we should pack small dries! So, after much panic, we found just a single dry. It was a Kossie Dun. Nothing like what was hatching, but as it turned out it was close enough. My friend and I went fish for fish, landing 13 before finally snapping off on a large one. By that point we were well and truly content. How lucky were we!

So, I've definitely had a bit of good luck in my fly fishing adventures - but you better believe I've had some ghastly bad luck too.

I've had the normal stuff like bags going missing and flight delays, and I've gone to the wrong airport multiple times. Even this week I've had a lodge that I've booked and paid for shut down due to a marital dispute!

But what has to be indisputably considered bad luck is shocking weather, and I'm talking here specifically about unexpected cyclones. I reckon that if I added it up, cyclones have been a feature of around one quarter of all the saltwater fly fishing adventures I've been on. The

mongrels follow me. If you get the chance to do a saltwater-hosted fly fishing holiday with me - don't!

My first wild and windy adventure was in the Seychelles. Ironically, it started with one of the biggest strokes of luck I've had in my lifetime. My then boss and a past president of the VFFA, Jim Allen, was supposed to go, but his knees decided to stop working properly, so he was forced to pull out. Refunds weren't an option, so a substitute had to be found at short notice. Availability is something every 21-year-old has, so by this stroke of incredible luck - away I went. Unlucky for Jim; lucky for me.

When we arrived at Farquhar (an island in the Seychelles) the weather was unbelievably good. Light breeze and hardly a cloud in the sky. We were greeted by vacating guests who had enjoyed a sublime week. Of course, the Russian oligarch covered in gold chains and with his 10 out of 10 mistress hanging off him, caught the biggest GT for the week.

There was little concern by the guides when we got there, but by day three things had taken a turn for the worse. The cyclone that was 200 km north had decided to make a beeline for us. We spent two stressful days moored in the lagoon, waiting for it to pass. And when it finally did, it was time to come home.

My most recent cyclonic fly fishing adventure was at Cocos Keeling Islands. On that trip the whole island got locked down, curtailing any hope of fishing. The aftermath was real, too. Palm trees down everywhere and lots of property damage. And Cocos doesn't offer a lot to do when the weather is bad. Fortunately, I'd packed Phil Knight's book *Shoe Dog*, which helped pass the time. Dreams and ambitions of landing my white whale

permit were quashed once again by this horrendous storm that likes following me.

In Argentina in 2019, just before the world shut down, I had a trip to the famed Jurassic Lake. Surely I'll be safe here - not a chance of a cyclone hitting Patagonia! But don't you worry - bad luck was still able to follow me there. Before the fishing began, I spent some time in Mendoza where my sister in law thought it a good idea to go hang gliding. I was reluctant, but I'm a man, so said 'yes' with some bravado. All was good until the landing where my ultra-experienced instructor crash landed, and my foot absorbed the majority of the impact. Scans when I got home confirmed that my foot was well and truly broken.

Needless to say, my mobility from that point was severely compromised. Finally, nearly 20 years later, I have some sympathy for Jim and his dodgy knees!

Malbec proved to be a decent lunchtime pain killer as I hobbled on and set up on a rock a short distance from the car. Nursing a sore foot and a bad mood I wasn't expecting much at all, but had a few casts nonetheless - and proceeded to

fluke a 20 lb rainbow trout, the biggest fish caught in the week.

Now the old saying goes: 10% of people catch 90% of the fish. And it's true. Somehow, a select few have managed to hack the system and improve their luck on the water.

Bad weather, losing your bags, breaking your foot - these things are just plain bad luck. But losing a fish because of a bad knot, or because you can't cast ... these shouldn't be considered bad luck. That's a cop out; a way of helping one sleep at night despite our inadequacies. Those with this kind of attitude never become good fishermen. Just as in business, an ability to learn and adapt is what helps one be the best we can be.

People fish for different reasons, and I'm in full support of all of them. One strange bunch though are those who fly fish for status, or self-importance. The 'sport of royalty', or something like that. They only buy Hardy reels, and they regularly experience Royal Coachman hatches on the Howqua. They just don't get it; yet they will proclaim themselves as experts, especially in non-fishing company where there's no one to call them out on their



VFFA dinners provide a great opportunity to catch up with friends

drivel. No amount of luck can help these goof balls.

Another strange lot are the pier rats. Those who have given up on normal life to pursue one thing, and one thing only: fly fishing. You'll find these guys sun up to sun down at their nearest urban fishery, wearing torn tracksuit pants and casting an old fly rod with single minded intent. Make no mistake, these guys catch more fish than anyone and luck has nothing to do with it. They simply put in the hours.

This lot are addicts, and should be treated as such. I suggest you keep your distance; but, if you do say hello, you're bound to learn something that will improve your luck!

Of course a big cheque book can improve your chances and help you get to the best fisheries at the best times. The cheque book fisherman is a very real identity, and there's likely a few of you here tonight who have afforded yourselves some very good fishing. But the true cheque book anglers only ever fish in the most exotic locations, and have guides and staff working their backsides off to improve their paying punters luck.

Guides in Mexico have gone so far as to have an apprentice onboard whose sole responsibility is to make sure the fly line doesn't get tangled as it falls onto the deck of the boat. And then there are guides using drones to find fish. It seems there's no end to these entrepreneurial luck improving innovations.

I don't mind putting in the hard yards for good fishing, but I'm not perfect. And I spend more than I can afford to improve my luck by any means. I guess I'm no purist and I need an ego stroke sometimes. See, I'm a member of an exclusive trout fishing syndicate in

Ballarat where the trout are big and rarely fished to. They're easy. It's a place that almost guarantees good luck, and is only a shade more sporting than fishing in a trout farm.

So spending a few dollars on decent gear, the best guides, and obtaining the best advice – all this will improve your luck and help you achieve some angling glory. No one is catching a 20 lb rainbow on a fly he paid two dollars for.

Now when luck does strike it has a tendency to cloud one's future judgement (like the guy at the Pokies who has his lucky machine). If we got lucky once, we figure it's a sure thing if we go back and do the same thing again. But just because Penstock Lagoon fired on an overcast day 10 years ago doesn't mean it will fire again.

You see, fisheries are fluid and so rarely predictable. What that previous lucky day should do is make you a more confident fly fisher. And a more confident fly fisher is a more effective one. Ultimately, luck aside, if you want to be a good fly fisher, you can. But you have to commit to it. You have to become a student of fly fishing, rather than just experimenting in it and hoping to get lucky on the day.

Thomas Jefferson put it beautifully when he said: "I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it."

You need to practice casting, practice your knots, and read articles. You need to work at it if you want to be any good. This is the stuff a big cheque book can't get you. It's what sorts the men from the boys and the girls from the women.

So happy fishing, and Good Luck!

The VFFA Library and a Book Review

... from President Simon Joel

As many of you know the VFFA library has been extensively re-catalogued, edited and rehoused by our librarian Bill Jeans. The library is now back in the strategy room at the Kelvin Club in its own bookcase. This library is for the enjoyment of all of our members, and with our new website we are going to be able to loan library books to members to enjoy at their leisure. Regular reviews of our books will be published in future newsletters.

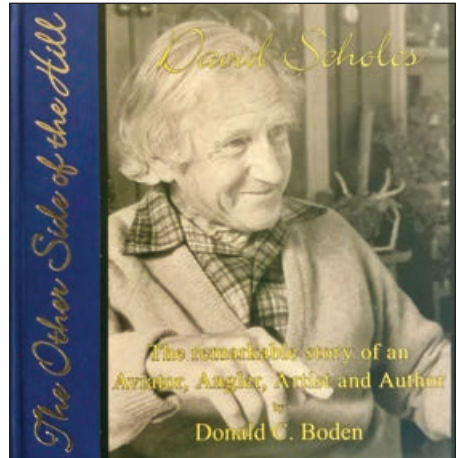
The following review is of David Scholes's biography, first published in the Biblio-File newsletter of the Joseland Society in 2022.

The Other Side of the Hill by Donald C. Boden is a biography of David Scholes, and was published by Stevens Publishing in 2006. Our President, Simon Joel, is the reviewer. Enjoy!

First, let me say that this is a biography about a man I've admired for a long time. He was complex and clearly somewhat inflexible, and this book was written by his long-time good friend who was a medico, not a writer. It's my opinion that a biography should do more than deliver a chronological list of the subject's achievements; it ought also provide a qualified insight into the individual and the personality behind the achievements. This book fails to do that.

Notwithstanding the author's inexperience and bias, I enjoyed reading about David Scholes' life, his passions, and his foibles. Mostly because I'm already a committed Scholes fan.

The author Donald Boden was a Launceston-based obstetrician and gynaecologist; and although I cannot



find other books written by him, in 1968 he did publish an article on paracervical nerve block in ANZJOG (Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology). Don was born in the UK, died in Launceston in 2020, and he was a close friend and a constant fishing companion of David's during his final years.

As David's Multiple Sclerosis progressed, his mobility became increasingly compromised, so Don spent many hours at David's residence, Hilltop, reflecting on David's life. And however well intentioned, Don's lack of writing experience resulted in an unevenly constructed book. At times I found myself frustrated and distracted by Don's clumsy writing style, and his propensity to gloss over the more contentious and controversial aspects of David's life. He left narrative gaps that had me hoping for more as I read on.

As my own fishing book collection has evolved over the years David Scholes' books have become an important and

central part of my library. He has had published a total of fourteen books, and all but one is about fly fishing. They truly are wonderful to read and are packed with ground-breaking and insightful information. His first Fly Fishing in Tasmania book was published in 1961 and is considered by many as a classic that is still relevant today. Although never having had the good fortune to meet David personally, I felt as though I knew him after spending many years fly fishing in Tasmania, reading his books, and hearing countless stories from several different quarters.

The book's Forward is written by David McIntyre, who was also an old friend and fishing colleague of David Scholes. David McIntyre was a Launceston-based orthopaedic surgeon, having been born and bred in the pretty riverside city. He was a keen fly fisherman, and along with David Scholes, was one of the twenty-eight 1955 founding members of The Fly-Fishers' Club of Tasmania. Unfortunately, the Forward also lacks depth and insight, simply offering friendly platitudes instead.

The early chapters of the book present a nice enough picture of David Scholes' early life; he being the younger of two boys born to Frank and Nancy Scholes. His older brother, John, was four years

old when David was born on January 29, 1923.

David's father was the medical superintendent of the now closed Fairfield Infectious Disease Hospital, and is portrayed as a dedicated doctor with a wing named in his honour. He was a highly regarded physician who worked on measles and poliomyelitis in addition to his hospital administration duties. His professional commitment was rewarded with a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George. This level of commitment also meant that Dr Scholes was mostly absent throughout David's childhood. Luckily for David and his brother John, their mother and their maternal grandmother, Annie Simpson, were their primary supporters. Annie, in particular, provided financial support to both of her grandsons.

I get a sense that due to the author's close friendship, David's own shortcomings as a father of four children was shelved, only getting a fleeting mention. David expresses some self-awareness toward the end of the book, reflecting briefly on his own failings and absenteeism as a father and husband, and drawing a comparison with his own father. Initially the lack of detail about his children struck me as odd, though on reflection perhaps that says more about me than being an indictment regarding the author's biographical skills, or lack thereof. Whatever the reason, it left me wanting to know more about David's wife and his children.

David's childhood and education at Scotch College Melbourne portray him as a shy and socially awkward boy, and while he lived in metropolitan Melbourne, he became a Scotch boarder at eight years of age. David's early fly fishing pursuits in the 1930s on the upper Yarra River before the construction of the



David Scholes' work desk

Upper Yarra Dam, are nicely described in the book; clearly suggesting that this beginning gives this shy ten-year-old a lifelong hobby and passion.

When I came across an online review of this book (www.tasfish.com by the publisher Mike Stevens) I found a map of the upper Yarra River in the 1930s. The on-line reviewer points out that although the single map looks authentic, it is in fact a carefully constructed composite of two maps sourced via the Victorian Museum.

Don's book describes David's life as a teen, recalling his air training in the RAAF, his aviation exploits in a Tiger Moth aeroplane out of Essendon airport, his hunting, and his rugby football. Don talks about how David grew up very quickly when in May 1943 he departed Australia for Britain to become a bomber pilot in World War Two. The book paints a picture for the reader of how, at an early age, his exploits and heroism in the war contributed to his maturation both as a pilot and as a man, and how he decided against a medical career after returning to Australia in 1945. Instead he followed another of his passions - art. The book draws a line between David's rejection of a medical career and his uneasy relationship with his father.

David's war-time fly fishing adventures in the United Kingdom are detailed, as are those in Tasmania, where he moved in 1950 with his new wife. The author explains how art became a major focus for David. He trained as a commercial artist at Melbourne's Swinburne College, then took up employment as a commercial artist in Launceston. Don also mentions that a box of David's work was discovered at the Queen Victoria Museum in Launceston during his research. Many of the discovered images are reproduced in the book, along with some of the other fine water colours David painted

during his life. David was an avid author himself, and as I mentioned I am a keen collector of his books. Don describes in some detail all of David's fourteen books, including the single non-fly fishing book about his RAAF service in Bomber Command.

Of course the part of David's life that most interests me in his biography is his fly fishing. David was a driving force behind the Fly-Fishers' Club of Tasmania, which was founded in 1955. Interestingly David sought to limit membership to fifty, with all required to be fly fishers only (no artificial lure members). However, his insistence on this and other membership restrictions were eventually overruled, and membership was granted to artificial-lure fishers.

It appears that David felt strongly that new younger members would have nothing to offer the club, and from the time of the change in membership criteria the club began to fade. In 1987 the club lent its support to the upcoming World Fly Fishing Championship which was held in Tasmania. Again, David's inflexible approach to his fly fishing pursuits was challenged. He felt strongly that fly fishing was not a competitive sport, and awards, glory and honour were a disservice to the club. David would have none of it and resigned from the club on principle. He could not be placated even though many members wrote letters imploring him to reconsider, which of course he did not.

The book goes on to talk about his resignation coinciding with his dogged attempt to establish another exclusive group of like-minded fly fishers dedicated to stream fishing - the Esk Valley Syndicate. The syndicate had five invited members, with any new members being voted on by secret ballot. Member's

objections about the ballot resulted in the syndicate never eventuating.

Another example of David's unyielding attitude focuses on art students in his early days at Launceston Technical College. It's reported that he divided the class into those who could draw and those who could not draw. He then concentrated solely on the more "gifted" students, ignoring the rest.

These damning examples clearly reveal David's inflexible personality; and although Don mentions them, he doesn't really reflect on how his social and

professional rigidity impacted across other aspects of his life.

As already stated, I've always enjoyed reading David's fly fishing books and I do feel I now know more after reading the biography. But that being said, it's mostly by reading between the lines that I've glimpsed more of the complex man behind the fishing legend.

David Fenwick

... a tribute from Jim Allen

In May of this year the VFFA lost one of its more interesting longtime members. Whilst rarely attending meetings or dinners in Melbourne, David always claimed the Association's Newsletter was the very best and eagerly awaited the monthly arrival of it.

David fished every year with me for nearly fifty years in the highlands at Miena in Tasmania. He also fished in the Snowy Mountains, staying with Tom and Molly Taylor at their Currango Homestead on the shores of Tantangara Reservoir. He joined VFFA members on trips to New Zealand as well, and many years ago frequently enjoyed the Warrnambool Fly Fishers' dinners.

He was a Melbourne dentist by profession, and in later years also passionate about his vineyard near Wallington on the Bellarine Peninsular. He was renowned for his white wines and Pinots. He was a great cook, and keen raconteur when a glass or two was poured.

I remember him extolling the virtues of a university education and asserting that every child should have one. Then he would remind me that he didn't enjoy being out polaroiding trout in the middle of Botsford knowing that the retail tills were working for his friends back on the mainland whilst he was earning nought unless his hand was in someone's mouth. And then his mate, with evil intent, would point out some of the advantages of owning a small business and having loyal staff without having gone to a university!!!

My shack was always a sort of drop-in meeting place for coffee in the mornings as we got older and did less early morning "dawn patrols". The conversations were often lively. The sign on the rear of my front door claimed a "section 18c free zone" where all irreverent discussion from both the left and right on religion and politics was allowed. Topics encouraged to be cut short were old men's health and photos/discussion of grandchildren. A small

poster still reads "Make Miena Great Again".

David Fenwick was a passionate angler and enjoyed many summers polaroiding the "sharks" on the Great Lake and the mayfly hatches on Little Pine Lagoon, Arthurs, Penstock and others. His nickname (we all had one) around the card table on evenings at Billy Beck's shack was "tooth fairy" as the games of 500 and Up and Down the River were played until nearly dawn over an ounce or two of claret.

David died after a difficult heart operation to replace a valve. He had been informed beforehand it was a 50/50 prospect. Before the surgery he gave strict

instructions that, if afterwards he couldn't play golf or go fishing again, then turn off the support. Sadly, after the surgery he lay basically in a coma, and slipped away a couple of weeks later.

Life was good with David Fenwick in Tasmania, and I will miss him. This small obituary is to remember another of our more interesting members. Sadly, many to this writer have gone on ahead. We also shared a boat at Queenscliff where we caught whiting and calamari on many evenings, but that's another story.

RIP David Fenwick.....Jim Allen

Protecting trout and stocking at Lake Wendouree

... from Taylor Hunt, Victorian Fisheries Authority

Lake Wendouree is one of our most productive trout fishing lakes in Victoria and is stocked annually with trout from the Ballarat Fish Hatchery and Snobs Creek Hatchery.



A fine brown from Wendouree



Stripping eggs from a brown trout

In 2023 the VFA, at the request of Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society and trout fishers, trialled a two-month closure to a 200 metres section of Lake Wendouree adjacent to the hatchery outfall pipe to protect the spawning trout that congregate in the pipeline flow.

The Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society had concerns over declining numbers of spawning brown trout which have

been collected in this location for many years by their volunteers, impacting the Society's ability to produce and supply trout to replenish Lake Wendouree and other Victorian waters. Juvenile trout have been released into Lake Wendouree and other Victorian waters from these efforts, a practise dating back to 1870.

Year-one of the trial in 2023 appeared to be a success as large numbers of brown trout were again available for Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society to strip and produce brown trout for stocking!

As a result, in June and July of this year the two-month recreational closed season to the 200 metre section of Lake Wendouree adjacent to the hatchery outfall pipe will be maintained to protect trout and stocking at Lake Wendouree. This decision follows a public consultation process where key recreational fishing stakeholders supported the continuation of the two-month protected area, these stakeholders including VRFish, Ballarat and District Angling Association, the Australian Trout Foundation, City of Ballarat and key recreational fishers.

The two-month closed season will be communicated through social media, fishing magazines, flyers, and on-site signage including a map of the closed season area with GPS coordinates. Full details can be found at www.vfa.vic.gov.au/wendouree

For further information, please feel free to call or email Taylor Hunt, Fisheries Manager on 0418 478 028 or taylor.hunt@vfa.vic.gov.au



A young man's Wendouree brown



Collecting browns for stripping

Cooma Notes by John Killip

My introduction to fly fishing came when my father-in-law thrust his rod into my hand and said: "Here, you bring this one in."

Fred was visiting from the UK and the plan was to introduce him to some Australian trout fly fishing. It was not part of the plan that I would be introduced to an activity that would completely change the course of my life. Fly fishing can do that, as millions of people have found, all over the world.

It took a few years, but eventually I gave up corporate life in Sydney and Margaret left the North Shore social scene, and we bought a ten-room motel on the Monaro. We found great pleasure and satisfaction in helping people enjoy their holidays, and I still get a thrill when I can assist someone catch their first trout with a fly rod.

The reason this has come to mind is that recently one of my daughters and her family came to visit us here in Cooma. Of course both our daughters have been fly fishing since they were teenagers, and in time I taught their husbands as well. Now I am working on my grand-daughters. Teaching people to fly fish is nearly as addictive as fishing itself.

We all went to a small lake that is well stocked with trout. It is easy to access and heavily fished, but the rainbow trout can be persuaded, sometimes, to try to eat an artificial fly. Because of vegetation growing around the edges it is best to be prepared to wade in the water. As a consequence of thirty years of fly fishing instruction and guiding we have a garage containing a wide variety of waders and boots, so there was much hilarity over kitting out everyone with suitable gear.



John's trout fishing instructions were clearly very productive

Once the adults in the party had been advised about fly patterns and fishing tactics it was time to begin fly casting practice. I find it best to start on a grassy lawn where there are no distractions. A basic overhead cast, line handling and retrieves were soon covered, and it was time to test the water, literally.

Both the girls were soon casting a fairly straight line some 15 metres or so and working their flies back with slow uneven retrieves. Then Lucy, the younger sister, suddenly felt a heavy tug and her rod bent. Of course at that stage I hadn't got around to explaining what to do next. I don't think my attempts at further instructions were very helpful just at that time. It was obviously a large rainbow, and I can vouch for the fact that they are quite a handful for even an experienced fisher. She did well for the first few hard runs, managing to work the fish back successfully. But then she tried to hold it and the tippet gave way.

After the excitement and laughter died down we all agreed that some instruction about playing fish should be next on the agenda.

Everyone returned to their fishing, and it wasn't long before a woop from Amber signalled more excitement. She did very well and after several runs from the trout she carefully brought it to the net. Their father also caught a trout, so it was a very enjoyable and successful outing.

It is not necessary to become a qualified fly fishing instructor before introducing someone to the sport. As I have tried to convey, the personal reward for doing so can be great. However, it is a good

idea to brush up your own technique before taking on the role of teacher. There are plenty of internet sites where good fly casting form is explained and demonstrated. If you follow the examples of the experienced instructors in teaching fly casting you shouldn't go too far astray. You will almost certainly find that your own casting improves as a result.

However as you know, there is more to fly fishing than just casting, so be sure you don't stop your advice there. Go fishing together and have the pleasure of seeing them catch their first trout on fly. Like me, you may become addicted to it!

Jason Platts' Recent Adventure

Not something you see every day ... last night I was carefully sneaking up on a rising trout when a tiger snake came out of the river from under my feet carrying a good size brown trout which I can only assume it captured from under water.

When the snake first exited the water the trout was still lively, but by the time I had pulled out my phone to take a video it was already paralysed. I watched as it eventually managed to flip the fish around head first and then took perhaps another 10 minutes to devour it. It looked to me like there was another smaller trout already in its belly. I have seen snakes eating small fish before, but I assumed they were dead fish or injured in the shallows. But I've never previously seen a snake come out of the river proper, having successfully hunted a fish. An amazing capture that I assume occurs more often than people realize. Snakes are indeed fine fishers.

(Members who have a Facebook Account can find Jason's page and see the fascinating capture and somewhat scary capture.)



Jason is a very successful stream fisher; but as he discovered you need to watch out for those Joe Blakes



Here is the tiger snake enjoying a meal with fish on the menu

The Wet, the Dry, and the Expert

... by John Gibson, in the February 1983 VFFA newsletter

During my years as a fly fisherman I have noticed that other than using a fly rod, fly reel, fly line and an artificial fly, all fly fishermen use vastly different techniques but can be categorised into three main groups - the "Wet", the "Dry", and the "Expert".

Of course these three main groups have associated subgroups within each main category, some examples of which are:

1. the "Wet" fly fishermen. These are probably the largest group of all and are generally more active and outgoing than those in the other groups, and are identified under the following sub-groups:
 - a) The Wet Wet fly fishermen
 - b) The Dry Wet fly fishermen
 - c) The Nymphs and
 - d) The Floggers

The Wet Wet fly fisherman is that hale hearty enterprising fisherman you see in his chest waders in the middle of a stream, or up to his armpits in a lake, casting to moving fish. He really enjoys himself and figures that if you can't beat them then join them.

The Dry Wet fly fishermen are a minority subgroup and are a little more sophisticated. They wouldn't step into the water under any conditions and are generally seen walking the banks wearing their thigh waders looking for moving fish before presenting their fly from some 30 yards up the bank.

They are usually more vain than the Wet Wet fly fishermen and are far more conscious of their appearance and tackle. They are never seen in patched waders or a torn vest and usually have the very latest Sage rods fitted with Hardy reels.

After all they do meet many more people along the banks than the Wet Wet fly fishermen meet in the water, and they must at least look the part.

The Nymphs are a relatively new breed of fly fishermen. They are the purists of the Wet fly fishermen, offering the trout the nymphs that create the hatches for the Dry Fly fishermen.

The Nymphs are tolerated by the Wet Wet and Dry Wet fly fishermen but are treated with contempt by the Dry fly purists who consider it an effrontery to take anything but a rising trout.

The Floggers are the backbone of the Wet fly fishermen and they encroach on the previous three sub-groups. Their only aim is to catch trout, and you see them trying every type of known fly and some unknown varieties too, fishing in impossible positions and conditions at any time of the day or night, usually putting all the trout down with the thump of their flies hitting the water.

2. The "Dry" fly fishermen – a far more exclusive group and usually less active but far more selective. They also fall into four main subgroups:

- a) the Watchers
- b) the Listeners
- c) the Floggers
- d) the Purists

The Watchers are by far the most common. You see them sitting nonchalantly on the bank waiting for a trout to reveal itself. Generally the Watchers spend more time watching for trout than fishing for them, and only occasionally present a fly if a trout comes within casting distance. Unlike the Wet Wet fly fishers they believe in letting the mountain come to Mohammed.

The Listeners are a very select sub-group. They don't start to fish until after dark, and they're generally found with a dry fly at the ready and line stripped from the reel seated beside a pool. At the slightest sip sound from somewhere in the inky waters they quickly present their fly with extreme diligence to their unseen quarry. To qualify for this select sub-group you must pass the initiation, which is to be able to locate the exact position of a 'ring-thing' off a can of Fosters as it hits the ground in the Southern Stand of the MCG on Grand Final Day. Having passed this test it is considered you will easily hear the sip of a trout at night above the noise of white water, wind, crickets, frogs, etc.

The Floggers are generally spurned by their fellow Dry Fly fishermen. Their method is to continually cast any sort of dry fly to any and every part of a stream with such rapidity that they may fool the trout into thinking that a hatch of that particular fly is happening, thereby causing the trout to rise on a feeding spree. So far as the Dry Fly flogger is concerned the least said the better.

The Purist is the most exclusive of all fly fishermen. Generally he buys his Plus Fours from Georges and his immaculate English tweed hat from Henry Bucks. He spends a fortune on the latest gadgets to augment his substantial range of gear. He spends hours studying insect life at the stream (he rarely if ever fishes lakes) before making a monumental decision as to which fly pattern will exactly match the hatch. Actually his expertise is far superior to that of the Wet Fly fisherman as it takes extreme skill to cast a spinner to match a swarm above the stream. (Most Wet fly fishermen find that their flies actually drop onto the water.)

Should no hatch occur, but the trout are seen taking nymphs, the purest must pack up and go home because it is

considered not cricket to take a non-rising trout.

3. The Experts. These are another rare breed, but I find it necessary to group them apart from the others. They are the “Never or rarely fish” fly fishermen who know more about the theory of fly fishing than G.M.S. knows, but rarely if ever put into practise what they preach. They are always eager to advise on any aspect of fly fishing, and no-one ties better or more intricate flies or makes rods better or spends more time practising casting, or for that matter does anything better than the Expert except catch a fish.

Of course there are many variations within the main and subgroups that are too numerous to mention, such as methods of casting, sizes of flies used, types of rods, waters, nets, reels, etc. In fact the only thing that fly fishers have in common is that they use a fly rod, fly reel, fly line and an artificial fly as I stated in my introduction, but suffice to say fly fishing is a very individualistic sport with most people doing their own thing in their own way and enjoying it.

By the way which group do you belong to?

(Acknowledgments to Yarra Valley Fly Fishers’ Newsletter)

The Late Season Fishing at Thornton

... from John Douglas

The foggy mornings and dropping temperatures foreshadow the coming winter and the inevitable close of the river season. It’s late May and the autumn leaves are still hanging in there but starting to pass their prime. But they are still framing the river in gold, so it remains a quite stunning fishing scene.

The Goulburn has begun to drop and the corresponding ‘angler hatch’ has occurred with a noticeable increase in angler visitation. This is likely to get stronger as more people realise that the river is low and accessibility has improved. Car parking has already been at a premium in many of the popular access points on the weekends, so you have to contend with sharing the river with others - even mid-week.

We’ve been blessed with a fantastic run of glorious weather of late, with warm sunny days and light winds. This is great for anglers, but some rain will be needed soon as the feeder streams are low.

While I feel the season is now starting to slow down, the fishing has still been OK. I’ve found it best in the warmer part of the day, but evenings can still see a hatch, with some small grey duns and a few larger ones in the mix. In the times I’ve hung out into the evening I’ve found that only a few fish have been rising, and any rise has often been very short-lived and all over well before dark.

Bead head nymphs are still catching the most fish for us in the runs and broken water, but there are still enough fish up sipping in the slower bubble lines and eddies to keep you wondering if you should be just using a dry. I’ve been fishing with mates a lot lately, and this has given us the opportunity to experiment with one rod set up with a nymph under an indicator dry fly and another rod with the just a dry fly. We have been sharing the rods, depending on who is having a shot at the fish and the type of water being fished. In the bubble

lines and for the sippers during the day a small red-bodied grey wing emerger type dry fly has worked on some of the fish, whereas others have been caught on a big Royal Wulff type indicator fly.

On the short-lived evening rise there has been a mix of mayflies coming off. Medium and small emerger-type flies have all been ok but have never seemed to be the 'right fly'. Maybe because of the variations in the hatch? I've personally been moving towards using soft hackle wets. With these I don't have to worry about changing flies in the gloom if I'm not confident of the dry I'm using, or I've got the size of the hatch wrong. They have been successful enough for me when fished like a dry fly cast at rising fish.

At this point the Goulburn fishing is still good, but will decline as we move into winter, so if readers want to have a fish

before the river season closes (and you can put up with crowds on a busy river) it's probably better doing it sooner rather than later.



The Goulburn in late May is a pretty place to fish



This sizeable rainbow was feeding in a bubble line

Tom Sutcliffe on Fishing Lakes

Tom Sutcliffe was a high profile fly fisher in South Africa. Sadly, he died a few months ago. One of the books he wrote (and he wrote several) was called *Hunting Trout*, and in it he gives his personal thoughts and suggestions on all aspects of fly fishing. So of course he writes about fishing lakes. Here are a few pages giving his ideas about stillwater fishing, as we are now coming into winter when our rivers are closed and lakes are where we will be casting our flies.)

The two important words in stillwater fly fishing are 'shallows' and 'structure'. The shallows are where the action is because that's where the bulk of the food is. Mostly you want to be wading shallows a little less than waist-deep, fishing a leader anything from nine to sixteen feet, using a rod of around eight to nine foot threaded with a 4 or 5 weight floating or Intermediate fly line. If anything constitutes bread and butter stillwater fly fishing this is it.

Occasionally you want to throw a fly back along the tracks you make wading, but otherwise you just fan out your casts and never take your eyes off the water. You keep looking for movement. Notice the word movement. You're not just looking for rises, and you will cast - without a split second's hesitation - at anything you can't exactly explain.

Looking back, I guess most fish hit me in the shallows anything from one to three feet below the surface. When I say 'most',



Tom practicing catch and release

probably forty percent of them. The rest roughly went as follows: twenty percent off the top, thirty five percent in the middle-water (say four to six feet deep) and the remaining five percent in really deep water.

There are plenty of fish off dam walls, naturally, and in the really deep water, but they are not necessarily bigger fish just because they live in the deepest parts of the lake, nor are there more of them. That's all myth. In fact, in really deep water, or off the wall for that matter, there aren't the numbers of fish you find in the shallows. Also, I have a sense that really deep water may be something of a sanctuary to trout and that when they choose to drop in there we maybe should be leaving them alone.

You'll find trout anywhere in shallows, meaning from the margins to the water under your longest cast. When you actually believe trout will be anywhere in shallow water, even right on the edges, you've made real progress in stillwater fly fishing.

One thing turns otherwise good shallows into stunning water - structure - meaning reedbeds, weedbeds, islands of grass, inlet streams, submerged riverbeds, tree stumps, drop-offs, old truck tyres, whatever. The closer you cast to any of these, the better your chances.

Your Approach to Lakes:

You start to fish lakes well when you start approaching them in exactly the same way you approach rivers. All the norms and rules of river fishing should apply - waiting, watching, sighting trout (when you can), keeping low and out of sight, stalking if you like, careful presentation, avoiding false casts, careful wading, checking water temperatures, matching hatches, ... and I could go on and on. Any rule you learned for rivers applies to lakes. If you think of any exceptions,

please let me know. And yes, as we said, drag can be a problem fishing a dry fly on lakes, in case you were just getting ready to call me.

As far as really big lakes go, those vast, intimidating expanses of flat water stretching as far as your eye can see, the best way to approach them is the same way you would eat an ox - one bite at a time. Pick a spot, on a bay with structure in it preferably, study the water and, well, just 'set up camp' as it were.

Small Flies

Generally in lake fishing we tend to underestimate the importance of small flies, though in my own fishing the discovery that smaller flies got more takes came as something of a breakthrough and a surprise. By smaller flies I mean nymphs around size 14 and 16, dries down to size 18. Dragonfly nymphs, and maybe even damsel nymphs, need to be larger, say around sizes 6 to 10 (but they're larger anyway, if only because they are traditionally tied on long-shank hooks).

In lake fishing, moving down to really small flies requires a daring leap of faith because, for most people, lakes have always meant flies around size 8, even size 6. And small flies don't exactly fill you with raw confidence on lakes, maybe something to do with the vastness of the water making small flies look, well, I don't know, at best insignificant, maybe even ridiculous.

The only way to overcome this prejudice is to move to smaller flies in stages. You could start with, say, a size 12 Olive Hare's Ear nymph. Try it for an hour each outing and once you feel confident fishing it, drop down to a size 14, then eventually to a 16. But I suggest you wage your small-fly campaign around structure, to give the flies an even chance.

The Best Time of Day on Lakes?

Who knows? It's a little like answering a question on weather patterns, in that you feel the need to start by saying something defensive but unhelpful, like 'It depends.' But although it does actually 'depend', I think I'd probably have to settle for the period between 12 midday and 2:00 to 2:30 in the afternoon, when most folks are eating lunch.

At least, that's what we discovered over the years. The number of trout we caught this time of the day is maybe surprising, but it's understandable. It has to do with rising water temperatures increasing nymph activity, and maybe more favourable changes in oxygen saturation. Certainly it isn't because of increased surface-hatching activity, because on stillwaters the major hatches are pretty well isolated to the quiet times around sunrise and sundown.

Having said all that, warm, drizzly days can be something else - sporadic rises bracketed only by full-blown hatches, the fish staying dilly all day. Then there're the drizzly days when there's no sign of fish on the surface, but electric activity everywhere under it; the sort of day when, without having seen a rise, you connect on nearly every other cast. What's happening is nymphs by the thousand are busy preparing under the water for emergence and you stumble into it with your size 16 Olive Hare's Ear, or a slender damsel, fished along the weed margins on a tiny orange indicator, and really clean up.

The most important message, though, is never to leave off fishing a lake over lunchtime.

False Casting Over Stillwater

A great sin!

You don't want to do this, at least not over clear shallows. The single cast, especially with a Single Haul added,

will clear enough line to reach ninety percent of fish around you. Having the line moving at high speed time and again over the water you're supposed to be fishing stacks the odds against you. In the end you have to spook some fish, and for what? A couple of extra yards? It's not worth it.

The Retrieve

Any retrieve is fine, as long as you vary it, and as long as it tends, on average, more towards being slow than quick. Persistently fast retrieves are, sadly, more the norm than the exception. It's one of the reasons I haven't taken to the stripping basket in trout fishing. I happen to think stripping baskets encourage the habit of high-speed retrieves.

The majority of casts should be retrieved until they are in close, but not that close you can't easily load the rod for the next cast. I begin by fishing the water right alongside me with short casts. It's a habit now. So by the time I'm throwing a long line I know the nearby water has been covered. Then the rest of the casts can safely be fished to within a comfortable casting distance.

I don't know what there is about a free-drifting sinking fly that fish find so attractive. Maybe the steady rocking of the line on the waves transmits subtle undulating movement to the fly, movement that trout find enticing and that fishermen can't replicate. So, one of the best retrieves with a nymph is no retrieve at all. Just fish the fly on the drift, under an indicator if you like, and if you don't use an indicator, watch the leader like a hawk, not just the tip of the fly line. It's the sort of fishing that needs faith and a steely resolve, but it's also the sort of technique that produces a real hog against the run of play.

When You Can't Buy a Fish

Fly fishing stillwaters can be - no, invariably is - hard work. That's an inescapable reality, certainly if you fish seriously, or plan to really get ahead. I'd be guessing, but in this country I'd say the mean yield per rod-day on lakes can't be more than four or five fish. Even on the better waters. And then there's nothing like consistency to that either, given that to average three or four fish means you have the odd outing with ten or twenty trout. But then more than just the odd one when you catch nothing.

The art and science is to make the best of the worst days and to develop coping strategies for what in the trade we call 'the dog days'. And 'dog days' there will be. They are part of the contract.

One strategy is to actually practise casting while you're fishing, on the assumption that while you aren't catching fish you might as well be doing something useful. For example, concentrate on perfecting 'long, Single Haul casts', or eliminating false casting, or going for distance without sacrificing anything on accuracy, or Roll Casts, or Steeple Casts, ... whatever.

The second thing is to introduce a diversion tactic. I like to break the day into fifteen to thirty-minute spells, so that any given tactic has a measurable beginning and end, and isn't so long that it gets boring in the middle. For example, say things are really slow and you decide to fish a large hopper in the deep water off the wall, then do it for thirty minutes then change to something else if it doesn't work. Or if you move position give each new place a fixed amount of time. It keeps your interest up.

Then finally, I take pronouncements that trout are 'off' with a pinch of salt. Mostly 'off' means they're probably 'on', just that you haven't actually figured out where, or



Float tubes give access to more water in lakes

to what. Trout can be very contrary. Have you noticed how often they come 'on' just when you decide to give up? In fact, every time I quit they consistently seem to perk up. I've seen more trout landed just as someone announces he's giving it away, than I've seen landed in the most extravagant summer-evening midge hatch. But staying in there sometimes needs real strength of character. Resting up is maybe a better option than actually quitting.

Thinking back, I have done a fair amount of bird watching, coffee drinking, and straw chewing myself over the years.

One reason I sometimes fail on lakes is that I don't change to a sinking line on slow sultry days to fish really deep. I know I should be doing just that at times, but somehow it just doesn't appeal to me. Of course it may to you, and by all means think of doing just that when all else has failed.

Australian Trout Foundation

Wild trout fisheries are highly valued socially and economically by anglers, regional communities and the Government in Victoria. Over the past five years, through the *Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program*, we, the Australian Trout Foundation, have learned a lot more about our trout fisheries, their population health, and opportunities to improve their management. As a result, significant work is underway to support our wild trout fisheries.

A strategy is now required to focus further investment in maintaining wild trout fishing opportunities into the future. This strategy, drafted by a steering committee of the Australian Trout Foundation (ATF), Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA), VRFish and other wild trout fisher partners will help guide the management of our precious wild trout fishery over the next 5 years.

Our Vision:

A healthy sustainable wild trout fishery for all Victorians.

Mission:

To protect, build and promote Victoria's wild trout fishery.

Partnership Approach:

To better understand and respond to threats to the wild trout fishery, a partnerships approach is needed. Key partners in our wild trout fishery include Victorian Fisheries Authority, VRFish, the Arthur Rylah Institute, the VFFA, the Council of Victorian Fishing Clubs and the Catchment Management Authorities for East Gippsland, West Gippsland

Wild Trout Learnings to Date:

Wild trout are self-sustaining populations that typically occur in the higher reaches of our trout streams. Wild trout are revered for their beautiful colouration, natural breeding origin and for the

remote undisturbed alpine rivers in which they are found.

The Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program (WTFMP) commenced in 2014 and is the largest collective investment in trout fisheries in Victoria. The WTFMP has led to significant benefits both in angler support and engagement and on-ground improvements.

Key findings from WTFMP include:

- Trout are adaptive and resilient, but their populations and 'catchability' are dynamic and, can fluctuate with changing environmental and climatic conditions,
- Water temperature and river flow rates are important to survival rates, growth rates and natural recruitment of wild trout,
- Hot summers and resulting high-water temperatures can severely impact trout,
- Streamside (riparian) habitat is critical for trout to buffer against changes to water temperatures, create in-stream habitat (fallen timber) and, to encourage production of terrestrial food sources,
- In-stream habitat of rocks, wood and structural complexity provide enhanced habitat for trout,
- Stocking of yearling brown trout has been shown to be ineffective in boosting populations,
- Angler engagement (and participation) is important in managing the wild trout fishery,
- There is evidence trout move upstream to cooler and or shaded reaches in hot summers.



The Australian Trout Foundation is busy working on improvements to trout streams



These findings have been shared at four Talk Wild Trout Conferences between 2015-2018, with over 1000 anglers attending, sharing and networking their wild trout fishing experiences.

Trout fishers are passionate about the fishery and the environment:

It's a proven fact that trout fishers are passionate about the fishery and the environment in and surrounding our beautiful trout streams and lakes, which is very fortunate because we've learned from research and experience that healthy waterways produce healthy fisheries. This is the main reason why so many fishers have volunteered to assist with in-stream and riparian restoration projects, planting trees and removing invasive weeds. There are more than 2,000 committed volunteers covering Victoria's trout regions and more are most welcome.

Victorian trout fishers win an RFL grant of \$110k to enhance our valuable fishery (This grant is funded by Recreational Fishers' Licence Fees)

The Victorian Fishing Authority gave trout fishers a huge vote of confidence when it delegated responsibility to the Australian Trout Foundation Vic (ATF) to manage and administer the funds that will be required to continue the current Wild Trout Management Program, plus additional priority actions contained in the recently distributed Victorian Wild Trout Strategy. The considerable advice and assistance provided by VFA's Inland Fisheries Managers to the ATF in preparation of the grant submission is greatly appreciated. The ATF is the recognized representative body for trout fishers and it will be calling on its group of passionate volunteers for assistance to carry out a number of important priority actions that will be funded by the grant monies. Some of these priority actions are listed here for your information:

- Continue the assessment of the Jordan Scotty incubators and stocking "wild fry" as a trout population recovery tool. Unfortunately, volunteers are unable to assist loading incubators and releasing fry this year because of COVID-19 restrictions.
- Identify locations for priority trout streams where riparian shade planting will maximise benefits to trout fisheries. Dr John Morrongiello will use the latest science to help prioritise locations alongside CMA and angler preferences. Anglers can become engaged by reporting locations that require riparian revegetation projects.
- Collect stream temperature data on priority trout rivers and make this information widely available to trout fishers via the ATF website and a new ATF App. The ATF, VFA & CMA's working together to upgrade up to 10 recording stations.
- Roll out a pilot program that enables angling clubs to manage/care for crown land river frontages. ATF, VFA & CMA's to work with DELWP to facilitate up to 4 pilot licence agreements for crown land frontages. Angler engagement by taking responsibility to manage and repair riparian land to improve fishing outcomes.
- ATF & CMA's to host 2 regional workshops per year. Following on from 3 previous successful workshops, CMA's and trout fishers to identify locations where revegetation will most benefit trout fisheries. Trout fishers can also advise on access problems.
- Promote sustainable trout fishing and sensitive harvesting practices. ATF and anglers to develop a pamphlet and videos to promote responsible trout fishing and handling practices.

- The link for the Victorian Wild Trout Strategy: <https://atfonline.com.au/home/page/Wild-Trout-Strategy>
- To our volunteers, we are looking forward to when we can meet again to continue working together on river health restoration projects. Two major “trees for trout” planting days at the

Steavenson and Ovens Rivers were cancelled, but GBCMA and NECMA made sound management decisions and have engaged contractors to plant the trees so as not to lose a year’s growth rate.



A nice rainbow trout taken on a nymph



Time to change flies

FLY OF THE MONTH

Rod Barford's Orange Spinner



Rod is well-known in the Australian fly fishing world. He was a prominent guide and member of a number of Government committees and groups involved in our trout fishery. He was for a time President of the Australian Trout Foundation.

Rod is a very keen fly tier and has designed a number of very effective flies he uses regularly in his fishing and guiding. Here is his orange spinner. (Some perceptive readers may recall that this fly was used many years ago as our Fly of the Month, but it's a very attractive fly and not too difficult to tie, so we thought it was worth another look.)

Materials for Rod's Orange Spinner

Hook: Thread: Tail: Body: Hackle:

Kamasan B400, sizes 12 & 14.

Orange Pearsall's Naples (or orange 3/0 Unithread). Three black Microfibbets.

Orange Pearsall's Naples.

Good quality well-marked Furnace cock hackle.

1. Tie in three black Microfibbets, using the thread to ensure the three tail fibres are widely spread in typical mayfly fashion.
2. Then continue winding the silk to form a typical tapered mayfly body.
3. Tie in the prepared hackle feather and wind it on. Ensure the hackle placement leaves room for a larger than normal head. The dark centre of the furnace hackle gives a good representation of the dark thorax of the real insect.
4. Whip finish the fly and add a drop of head cement.
5. Then trim off the bottom of the hackle so that the fly sits flat on the water surface. Ideally the remaining hackle should be about half of the hook gape.



Good flies for lake fishing'

VFFA 2024 meetings & other activities

June

- 5 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes
Event Co-ordinator - Lyndon Webb (0488 555 724)
- 11 Tuesday The trout fishing season in Victorian rivers officially closes at midnight on Tuesday, June 11, this year.
- 16 Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing at 10.30 am
- 20 Thursday General Meeting – 7.30 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker – Sam Fawke
- 26 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7pm on Zoom

July

- 2 Tuesday Fly Tying at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7pm
- 18 Thursday Lunchtime General Meeting – 12 noon at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker – John Pilkington
- 21 Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing at 10.30 am
(Certified Casting Instructors will be present)
- 31 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6pm at the Kelvin Club

August

- 6 Tuesday Fly Tying at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7pm
- 18 Sunday President's Casting Day at the Red Tag Casting Pool,
commencing at 10.30 am
- 21 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7pm on Zoom
- 28 Wednesday Annual dinner & Auction
Speaker – Cameron McGregor

September

- 3 Tuesday Fly Tying at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7pm
- 7 Saturday Trout season opens for Victorian rivers
- 19 Thursday 2024 Annual General Meeting at 7.30 pm - a Zoom meeting.
- 22 Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing at 10.30 am
- 25 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes for some early Spring fishing.
10am till dark. Event co-ordinator - Lyndon Webb (0488 555 724)
- 25 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6pm at the Kelvin Club

October

- 6 Sunday Annual Trip to Thorpdale to fish the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishing Club's stocked dams as guests of the Latrobe Valley members.
Co-ordinator – Hamish Hughes (0418 108 686)
- 17 Thursday General Meeting – 7.30 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Annual Auction of fly fishing books and equipment
(Meal at 6pm and auction commencing at 7pm)
- 30 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7pm on Zoom